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ABSTRACT

Two studies were made of the attitudes of prospective white teachers toward inner-city schools. The first study investigated whether 250 prospective white teachers from a major teacher training institution held more positive attitudes toward suburban or inner-city schools. Osgood's Semantic Differential (SD) revealed that the subjects held positive attitudes toward suburban schools and negative attitudes toward inner-city schools. This investigation concluded that teacher expectancy affected the student's self-concept of academic ability. The second study determined whether a positive shift in the attitudes of prospective white teachers would be evident following exposure to inner-city schools. SD revealed that exposure to inner-city schools did have a positive effect, though statistically not significant, on the attitudes of the subjects. Results also revealed that this same exposure led to negative attitudes toward suburban schools. Recommendations were made for more concentrated inner-city experiences. (Three tables of data are included along with 11 references.) (BRB)

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# AN ANALYSIS OF THE ATTITUDES OF PROSPECTIVE WHITE TEACHERS TOWARD THE INNER-CITY SCHOOLS

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We are now facing a major crisis in Urban Education: the failure of the schools to provide quality education for the inner-city child (5). As a result the recruitment of the "right teachers" for inner-city schools is fast becoming the concern of many school administrators and directors of teacher training institutions. Previous research by Groff (7), Green (6), and others has supported the notion that the most critical variable in the educative process is the attitude of the teacher. Further, the teacher's success in relating to and helping the child will depend upon his acceptance of the child for what he is and what he brings to the learning situation. Rogers (10) maintains that a genuine belief that the child can learn is the most important asset a teacher can have. This genuineness refers to the teacher's ability to prize, accept, and trust their students in addition to the development of an empathic understanding for them.

Inner-city schools are largely staffed by white middle-class teachers. Many of these teachers possess attitudes that impede the learning process and academic achievement of the inner-city child. Gottlieb (3) found that white teachers often use adjectives such as "talkative, lazy, high strung, rebellious, and fun-loving" to describe black students. Black teachers viewed these same students as "happy, cooperative, energetic, ambitious, and fun-loving". Teachers whose attitudes reflect

SP 006 968

racial and social class bias (8) will alienate the child thus precluding any meaningful participation in the instructional process.

Academic qualifications have heretofore been the only criteria used in the selection of teachers for the inner-city school. The research cited above lends support to the notion that an equally critical variable is the attitude of the teacher toward the inner-city school. Teachers who are recruited for the inner-city must be those who possess positive attitudes toward social class and racial differences as well as being academically competent. It is at the source of supply in our teacher education programs that this assessment of attitude becomes imperative.

Problem

Two separate investigations were conducted making use of the same subjects. The first study was designed to investigate whether prospective white teachers attending a major teacher training institution held attitudes toward suburban schools that were more positive than their attitudes toward inner-city schools. The importance of this investigation is under scored by the research of Rosenthal and Jacobson (11). These researchers found a significant relationship between teacher expectations and the academic achievement of students. They concluded that teacher expectancy is a crucial educational variable. A basic assumption underlying this study is that teachers who have negative attitudes toward the inner-city schools will have low expectations for the inner-city child thus affecting in a negative way the child's self-concept of academic ability.

The second investigation extended the previous study. It was designed to determine whether a positive shift in the attitudes of pro-

spective white teachers toward inner-city schools would occur as a function of their exposure to pre-service educational experiences germane to inner-city teaching. If the results of this study demonstrate that prospective teachers who are exposed to the inner-city educational experiences incorporate positive attitudinal changes toward inner-city schools, than other teacher training institutions and school systems may wish to include these educational experiences into their curriculum.

## STUDY I

### Procedure

A total of 250 prospective white teachers were used as subjects in this investigation. They were randomly selected from a population of 1,200 students. These subjects were all enrolled in a pre-service education course taken by all prospective teachers at a large midwestern university. The sample was composed of 84 males and 166 females. Ninety-five subjects were elementary education majors and 155 were secondary education majors.

The instrument employed in the assessment of attitude changes was Osgood's Semantic Differential. The subjects were asked to rate their attitudes toward two major concepts -- INNER-CITY SCHOOLS, and SUBURBAN SCHOOLS on 20 bipolar adjective scales. Each scale had high saturation on the evaluative factor and negligible loading on other factors (9). The basic assumption made here is that the experiential background of the subject determines his affective reaction to the stimulus concept (9). Significant differences in group means were tested by t-test. The level of rejection for the hypothesis was established at alpha = .05.

Results and Discussion

The findings present in Table 1 show the mean scores for the concepts Inner-City School and Suburban School. A t-test was conducted on the mean scores to determine the significance of the difference between the subjects' response to the two scales. The value of t was 30.34 with 498 degrees of freedom. Significance at the .05 level was 1.66. The major hypothesis (Attitude mean scores of prospective teachers toward the concept Suburban School will be higher than their attitude mean score toward the concept Inner-City School) was strongly substantiated and therefore accepted.

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Insert Table 1 about here

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The correlation coefficient for the two scales was -.06. This indicated that the responses on the inner-city scale were independent of the responses on the suburban scale. These prospective white teachers have clearly made a distinction between inner-city schools and suburban schools. Their preceptions of inner-city schools were in the scales' negative region while their perceptions of suburban schools were in the scales' positive region. The research of Gottlieb (3) and Gramb (4) demonstrated that white teachers have the propensity to perceive inner-city children negatively. It appears that perhaps a relationship exists between their research and the findings of this study.

This finding raises some serious questions, the most important being how can quality education become a reality when so many prospective teachers, some of whom will staff inner-city schools have such negative atti-

tudes toward the inner-city school? Bearing in mind the belief that teacher expectancy is a crucial variable, the next obvious question is, can prospective teachers who perceive inner-city schools negatively hold high expectations for the inner-city child? It would seem likely that prospective teachers who hold such attitudes will find it difficult to give the inner-city child the kind of sensitivity and understanding he so desperately needs.

There are two apparent solutions for the above mentioned problem. The first is to accelerate the recruitment of black teachers. Secondly, develop pre-service and in-service programs that focus on attitudinal change. Study II addresses itself to the latter solution.

## STUDY II

### Procedure

The second investigation exposed the subjects to educational experiences designed to provide them with the opportunity to examine their attitudes toward inner-city schools. The pre-service program developed included lectures, micro-labs and small discussion groups. The major focus of the program was the presentation of information explaining how racism manifests itself in education i.e. the tendency of large numbers of teachers to view students in inner-city schools as culturally deprived, culturally disadvantaged, and in general unable to learn. Students were frequently encouraged to look introspectively at their attitudes toward the Inner-City community (micro-labs served this purpose well).

Using a Quasi-Experimental design (1) the subjects were broken into control and experimental groups. As in study I the instrument employed in the assessment of attitudes was Osgood"s Semantic Differential (9).

Significant differences in the group means were tested by analysis of variance. The level of rejection for the hypothesis was established at alpha = .05.

Results and Discussion

The impact of the treatment on the attitudes of the experimental group was determined by analysis of the following hypothesis: Attitude mean scores of prospective white teachers who participated in the inner-city educational experiences will be higher than the attitude mean scores of prospective white teachers who did not participate.

An examination of Table 2 reveals that the experimental group mean score for prospective teachers on the concept Inner-City School increased while their mean score in the concept Suburban School decreased. In Table 3 analysis of variance was conducted on the mean scores of the control and experimental groups. For the concept Inner-City School the f value of .1430 with 249 degrees of freedom was not significant at the .05 level. However, the table reveals that such differences as exist were in the direction which was expected.

For the concept Suburban School the f value of 14.0373 with 249 degrees of freedom was significant at the .05 level. In positing the above hypothesis it was reasoned that scores on the suburban scale would remain approximately the same for both the experimental and control group. However, a shift in the negative direction by the experimental group on the concept Suburban School occurred. The experimental group's perception of suburban schools was adversely affected by the treatment.

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Insert Table 2 about here

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Insert Table 3 about here

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The results show that while the treatment had a positive effect on attitudes toward the inner-city school the difference however, was not strong enough to be statistically significant. This suggests that perhaps a strengthening of the treatment will yield a more significant attitude change. The impact of the treatment on prospective teacher attitude could be strengthened by extending the program to five weeks to allow for a more in-depth experience. More time could be spent in micro-labs and less in large groups.

This experiment yielded, however, an unexpected finding, the significant effect the treatment had on attitudes held by these prospective white teachers toward suburban schools. The experimental group perception of suburban schools was significantly more negative than the control group perception. This change in attitude might have been caused by material presented which focused on institutionalized facism and the suburban school. This material examined the role of the suburban school in transmitting attitudes, values, and beliefs. Perhaps these prospective white teachers realized that the attitudes they held toward inner-city schools were in part shaped in suburban schools. Further, that as a result their perceptions of social reality were in many ways distorted.

With respect to the treatment effect it is worth noting that exposure to the treatment caused many of the prospective white teachers to become hyperanxious. A possible explanation for their reaction is Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance (2). The belief systems of these prospec-

tive white teachers were thrown into a state of disequilibrium. That is to say that when racist attitudes and beliefs were challenged many prospective teachers reacted bitterly. A common complaint was that both prospective black teachers and black instructors should have participated. The coordinating staff excluded blacks because it was felt that when blacks are involved whites can avoid dealing with their own attitudes via the "sympathetic cop-out" (focusing on effects instead of the causes). Other prospective teachers complained that no solutions were offered for the problems. These reasons and many others were cited as the prospective teachers' struggle to bring their belief systems back into a state of equilibrium.

Finally the results of this investigation lend support to the position that attitude assessment must become a requirement for teaching in inner-city schools. This study by assessing the impact of pre-service educational experiences germane to the inner-city school on the attitudes of prospective white teachers, provides some framework for the design of future pre-service education programs. It is hoped that these findings will provide school administrators and those responsible for teacher education programs with some meaningful insights in this vital area. Perhaps then the recruitment of the "right teachers" for inner-city schools will become a reality.

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TABLE I

Means, Standard Deviations And t Value For The

Concepts Inner-City School And Suburban School

| Inner-City School n = 250 | | Suburban School n = 250 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mean | S. D. | Mean | S. D. | d.f. | t |
| 56.25 | 14.25 | 97.51 | 15.88 | 498 | 30.34 |

TABLE 2

Means And Standard Deviations For Control And Experimental Groups

| | Control Group n = 125 | | Experimental Group n = 125 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Concepts | Mean | S. D. | Mean | S. D. |
| Inner-City School | 55.90 | 13.26 | 56.60 | 15.74 |
| Suburban School | 101.18 | 14.27 | 93.85 | 16.60 |

TABLE 3

Analysis Of Variance For The Control And Experimental Groups

On The Concepts Inner-City School And Suburban School

| Sources of Variation | d.f. | Estimated Variance | F |
|---|---|---|---|
| Between Classes | 1 | 30.2760 | .1430 (Inner-City School) |
| Within Classes | 248 | 211.6970 | |
| Between Classes | 1 | 3363.5560 | 14.0373 (Suburban School) |
| Within Classes | 248 | 239.6166 | |

# END

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